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limit to look the part. You can't iron the hoof marks out of my mug in a hundred years. The old desert and the border towns and the bottle burned 'em in to stay. Them kind of looks don't go with business clothes. I got to look fly—jest like I didn't know no better."

"Perhaps you are right. You seem to make a go of everything you tackle." "Yep! Some things I made go so fast I ain't caught up with 'em yet. You know I used to wonder if a fella's face would ever come smooth again in heaven. That was a spell ago. I ain't been worryin' about it none lately."

"How old are you?"

"Me? I'm huggin' thirty-five close. But not so close I can't hear thirty-six lopin' up right smart."

"Only thirty-five!" exclaimed Winthrop; then quickly, "Oh, I beg your pardon!"

"That's nothin'," said Overland generally. "It ain't the 'thirty-five' that makes me feel sore, it's the 'only.' You said it all then. But believe me, pardner, the thirty-five have been all red chips."

"Well, you have lived!" sighed Winthrop.

"And come close to forgettin' to once or twice. Anyhow, speakin' of heaven, I'd jest as soon take my chances with this here mug of mine, what shows I earned all I got, as with one of them there dead fish faces I seen on some guys that never done nothin' better or worse than get up for breakfast."

Winthrop smiled. "Yes. And you believe in a heaven, then?"

"From mornin' till night. And then more than ever. Not your kind of a heaven, or meebly any other guy's. But as sure as you're goin' to crease them new boots by settin' too close to the fire there's somethin' up there windin' up the works regular and seein' that she ticks right and once in awhile chuckin' out old wheels and puttin' in new ones. Jest take a look at them stars! Do you reckon they're runnin' right on time and not jumpin' the track and dodgin' each other that slick—jest because they was throwed out of a star factory promiscuous like a shovel of gravel? Sure, there's somethin' runnin' the big works, but whether me or you is goin' to get a look in—goin' to be let in on it—why, that's different."

Winthrop drew back from the fire and crossed his legs. He leaned forward, gazing at the flames. From the distance came the howl of coyotes.

CHAPTER XII.

Silent Saunders.

ONE after another, in the course of the two years following Colie's arrival, the old riders of the Moonstone rancho drifted away. There remained but Brand Williams, the foreman; Colie and the sturdy, hard riding Miguel, a young Spanish vaquero, who was devoted to but two things in life, his splendid pinto pony and the Moonstone ranch.

The others had been lured to the new oil fields up north—to the excitement of Goldfield or to Mexico City, where even more excitement promised. In their stead came new men—Bud Light, Parson Long, Billy Dime and one Silent Saunders.

Louise became acquainted with the new men while riding with her uncle. She was his constant companion in the hills. One by one the new arrivals became devoted to her. Her sincere interest in the ranch work pleased them, and naturally, for it was their work. Walter Stone was also pleased with his niece's interest in the detail of the ranch work. She was as a daughter to him. Some day the property would be hers.

Fully conscious from within herself of her dependence upon her uncle, Louise managed to be of inestimable service. She performed her self-allotted tasks without ostentation. She had that rare quality of stimulating enthusiasm among the men—enthusiasm for their work and pride in giving faithful and energetic service—pride in accomplishing a little more each day than was asked or expected of them. Louise's youth, her beauty, her sincerity and, above all, her absolute simplicity of manner commanded admiration and respect among the hard riding Moonstone boys. She was to them a "lady," yet a lady they could understand. Here was a gentle tyranny. A request from her was deemed a great compliment by its recipient.

All of them, with the exception of Colie, openly praised her horsemanship, her quiet darning, her uniform kindness. Her beauty had ceased to be commented upon. It was accepted by them as one accepts the fragrant beauty of a rose, naturally, silently, gratefully.

Colie had gained in height and breadth of shoulder. He no longer needed instruction in managing broncho stock. He loved the life of the

hills—the cool, invigorating mornings, the keen wind of the noon peaks, the placidity of the evening as the stars multiplied in the peaceful sky.

He became that rare quantity among cowmen, a rider who handled and mastered unbroken horses without brutality. This counted heavily for him, both with Louise and Walter Stone. Men new to the range laughed at his method of "gentling" horses. Later their laughter stilled to envious desire. Lacking his invariable patience, his consistent magnetism, they finally resented their old methods and earned dominance by sheer strength of arm—"main strength and awkwardness," as Williams put it.

"It's easy—for him," commented Brand Williams, discussing Colie's almost uncanny quelling of a vicious, unbitted mustang. "It's easy. You fellas expect a horse to buck and bite and kick and buffalo you generally. He don't. He don't expect anything like that, and he don't let 'em learn how."

"Can you work it that way?" asked Billy Dime.

"Nope. I learned the other way, and the horses knows it. I always had to sweat. He's born to it natural, like a good cow pony is."

And Colie looked upon his work as a game—a game that had to be played hard and well, but a game nevertheless. Incidentally he thought often of Overland Red. He had searched the papers diligently for a year before he received the first letter from Overland. The news it contained set Colie to thinking seriously of leaving the Moonstone rancho and joining his old companion in this new venture of gold digging, which, as Overland took pains to explain, was "paying big." But there was Louise. They were great friends. They had even ridden to town together and attended the little white church in the eucalyptus grove. He thought of their ride homeward late that Sunday afternoon.

Once and once only had Overland's name been mentioned in the bunk house. Saunders, discussing horses and riders in general, listened to Colie's account of Overland's escape from the deputy, Tenlow. Then he spoke slightly of the feat, claiming that any man who had ever ridden range could do as much with the right pony.

Brand Williams tried to change the subject, for shrewd reasons of his own, but Colie flamed up instantly. "I got a little saved up," he said, "mebbe \$800. She's yours if you dast to walk a horse, comin' or goin', over that drift that Red took on the jump. Are you game?"

"I'm not on the bet," replied Saunders. "So Overland Red is a friend of yours, eh?"

"Overland Red could ride where you dasset to walk and drag a halter," asserted Colie. Then he relapsed to silence, a little ashamed in that he had been trapped into showing temper.

Williams the tactician astonished the bunk house by adding: "The kid is right. Red could outride most men. I was his pal once down in Sonora. There ain't a better two gun artist livin'." And the lean foreman looked pointedly at Saunders.

Saunders smiled evilly. He had reason to believe that Williams had spoken the truth.

A few weeks later Williams, returning unexpectedly to the bunk house, found Saunders changing his shirt preparatory to a ride to town. The rest of the boys were already on their way to the Oro rancho across the valley. Williams saw two puckered scars, each above the elbow, on Saunders' bared arms.

"That was good shootin'," said the foreman, indicating the other's scarred arms.

"Fair," said Saunders gruffly.

"Takes a gun artist to put a man out of business that way and not finish him," said Williams, smiling.

"Cholo mixup," said Saunders.

"And shootin' from the ground at that," continued Williams. "And at a fella on a horse. Easy to see that, for both holes are slantin' up. The shootin' was done from below."

Saunders flushed. He was about to speak when Williams interrupted him. "Makes me think of some of Overland Red's—that is, old Red Jack Summers' fancy work. I don't know why," he drawled, and, turning, he left the bunk house.

Colie, returning from a visit to the Oro rancho that evening, was met by Williams. The latter was on foot. "Drop into my shack after dark," said the foreman. Then he stepped back into the bushes as the other men rode up.

The foreman's interview with Colie that evening was brief. It left a lot to the imagination. "You said too much about Overland Red the other night when you was talkin' to Silen-

Saunders," said Williams. "He's tryin' to find out somethin'. I don't know what he's after. Keep your eye peeled and your teeth on the bit. That's all."

A month had passed. The air was warm and clear, the sky intensely blue. Moonstone canyon grew fragrant with budding flowers. The little lizards came from their winter crevices and clung to the sun warmed stones. A covey of young quail fluttered along the hillside under the stately surveillance of the mother bird. Wild cats prowled boldly on the southern slopes. Cottontails huddled beneath the grass-wood brush and nibbled at the grasses. The canyon stream ran clear again now that the storm washed silt had settled. On the peaks the high winds were cold and cutting, but on the slopes and in the valleys the earth was moist and warm.

Louise, humming a song, rode slowly along the Moonstone canyon trail. At the "double turn" in the canyon, where dwelt Echo and her myrmidons, Louise rode more slowly.

Dreaming France, the cobbler's son, took his tools and lace. Wrought her shoes of scarlet dye, shoes as pale as snow. They shall lead her wild rose feet all the fairy paces, Danced along the road of love, the road such feet should go.

She sang slowly, pausing after each line that the echoes might not blur.

"Danced along—along—the road—of love, the road—of love—of love," sang the echoes.

Louise smiled dreamily. Then the clatter of Boyar's shod hoofs rang and re-echoed, finally to hush in the gravel of the ford beyond.

Why Louise thought of Colie just then it would be difficult to imagine. Still she had caught herself noting little details associated with him and his work. He brushed his teeth. Not all of the other men did. He did not chew tobacco. Despite his lack of early training he was naturally neat. He disliked filth instinctively. His bits, spurs and trappings shone. He had learned to shoe his string of ponies, an art that is fast becoming lost among present day cowmen. With little comment, but faithful zeal, he copied Brand Williams. This, of course, flattered the tactician cowman, who unobtrusively arranged Colie's work so that it might bring the younger man before the notice of Walter Stone and incidentally Louise. Of course Louise was not aware of this.

The girl no longer sang as she rode, but dreamed, with unseeing eyes on the trail ahead—dreamed such dreams as one may put aside easily until, perchance, the dream converges toward reality, which cannot be so lightly put aside.

Brand Williams had his own ideas of romance, ideas pretty well submerged in the depths of hardy experience, but existing nevertheless as an immovable as the bed of the sea. He badgered Colie whenever he chanced to have seen him with the rose girl, and, smiling inwardly at the young man's indignation, he would straightway arrange that Colie should ride to town for, say, a few pounds of staples wanted in a hurry, when he knew that the buckboard would be going to town on the morrow and also that there were plenty of staples in the store-room.

Something of the kind was afoot, or, rather, a-saddle, as Louise rode down the Moonstone trail, for beyond the turn and the rippling ford she saw a little, blue shirted figure that she knew.

Louise would not have admitted even to herself that she urged Boyar. Nevertheless the reins tightened and slackened gently. Boyar swung into his easy lope. It pleased the girl that Colie, turning in his saddle at the sound of hoofs, waved a salute, but did not check his horse. He had never presumed on her frank friendship and "taken things for granted." He kept his place always. He was polite, a little reticent and very much in love with Louise. Louise did not pretend to herself that she was not aware of it. She was all the more pleased that Colie should act so admirably. She had loaned him books, some of which he had read faithfully and intelligently. In secret he had kissed her name written on the flyleaf of each of them. He really rather adored Louise than loved her, and he builded well, for his adoration (unfortunate as adoration must ever be until perchance it touches earth and is translated into love) was of that blithe and inspiring quality that lifts a man above his natural self and shapes the lips to song and the heart to unselfish service. He knew himself to be good looking and not altogether a barbarian. No morbid hopelessness clouded his broad horizon. He knew himself and cherished his strength and his optimism. He ate slowly, which is no insignificant item on the credit side of the big book of Success.

Colie lifted his broad brimmed hat as Louise rode up. His face was flushed. His lips were smiling, but his dark eyes were steady and grave.

"Morning, Colie! Boyar is just bound to lope. He never can bear to have a horse ahead of him."

"He don't have to very often," said Colie.

"Of course there are Kentucky saddle horses that could beat him. But they are not cow ponies."

"No. And they couldn't beat him if they had to do his work in the hills. About a week of the trails would kill a thoroughbred."

"Boyar is very conceited, aren't you, boy?" And she patted the sleek arch of his neck.

"I don't blame him," said Colie, his eyes twinkling.

"Going all the way to town?" asked Louise.

"Yes. Brand wants some things from the store."

"I'm going to the station. We ex-

pect a telegram from some friends. Maybe they'll be there themselves. I hope not though. They said they were coming tomorrow, but would telegraph if they started sooner. We would have to get Price's team and buckboard, and I'd be ashamed to ride behind his horses, especially with my—my friend from the east."

"Boyar and this here buckboard colt would make a pretty fair team," ventured Colie, smiling to himself.

"To drive? Heavens, Colie, no! They're neither of them been in harness."

"I was just imagining," said Colie.

"Of course!" exclaimed Louise, laughing. "I understand. Why, I must be late. There's the train for the north just leaving the station. I expected to be there in case the Marshalls did come today. But they said they'd telegraph."

"I can see three folks on the platform," said Colie. "One is the agent. See his cap shine? Then there's a man and a woman."

"If it's Anne she'll never forgive me. She's so formal about things. It can't be the Marshalls, though."

"We can ride," suggested Colie. And the two ponies leaped forward. A little trail of dust followed them across the valley.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Guests Arrive.

AT the station Louise found her guests, young Dr. Marshall and his wife, also the telegram announcing the day they would arrive.

"I'm sorry," began Louise. But the Marshalls silenced her with hearty "Oh, pshaw!" and "No matters," with an incidental hug from Anne.

"Why, you have changed so, Anne!" exclaimed Louise. "What have you been doing? You used to be so terribly formal, and now you're actually hugging me in public!"

"The 'public' has just departed, Miss Lacharme, with your pony, I believe. He rides well—the tall, dark chap that came with you."

"Oh, Colie! He's gone for the buckboard, of course. Stupid of me not to drive down. We really didn't expect you until tomorrow, but you'll forgive us all, won't you? You can see now how telegrams are handled at these stations."

Anno Marshall, a brown eyed, rather stately and pleasantly slender girl, smiled and shook her head. "I don't know. I may if you will promise to introduce me to that fascinating young cowboy that rode away with your horse. I used to dream of such men."

Young Dr. Marshall coughed. The girls laughed.

"Oh, Colie!" said Louise. "Of course you will meet him. He's our right

hand man. Uncle Walter says he couldn't get along without him, and Aunt Eleanor just thinks he is perfect."

"And Louise?" queried Anne Marshall.

"Same," said Louise noncommittally. "I don't see why he took Boyar with him to the store though."

The Marshalls and Louise paced slowly up and down the station platform, chatting about the east and Louise's last visit there before Anne was married. Presently they were interrupted by a wild clatter of hoofs and the grind and screech of a hastily applied brake. The borrowed buckboard, strong, light, two seated and built for service, had arrived dramatically. Colie leaned back, the reins wrapped around his wrists and his foot pressing the brake home. In the harness stood or, rather, gyrated Boyar and Colie's own pony, Apache. It is enough to say that neither of them had ever been in harness before. The ponies were trying to get rid of the appended vehicle through any possible means. Louise gasped.

"Price's team is out—over to the Oro rancho. I knew you wanted a team in a hurry," said Colie.

"It looks quite like a team in a hurry," commented Dr. Marshall. "Your man is a good driver?"

"Splendid!" said Louise. "Come on, Anne. You always said you wanted to ride behind some real western horses. Here they are."

"Why, this is just—just bully!" whispered the stately Anne Marshall. "And isn't he a striking figure?"

"Yes," assented Louise, who was just the least bit uncertain as to the outcome of Colie's hasty assembling of untutored harness material. "It is just 'bully.' Where in the world did you unearth that word, Anne?"

Dr. Marshall's offhand designation of the buckboard as "a team in a hurry" was prophetic, even to the end.

What Boyar could not accomplish in the way of equine gymnastics in harness Apache, Colie's pony, could.

Louise was a little fearful for her guests, yet she had confidence in the driver. The Marshalls apparently saw nothing more than a pair of very spr-

sted "real western horses" like one reads about, you know," until Dr. Marshall, slowly coming out of a kind of anticipatory haze, as Boyar stood on his hind feet and tried to face the buckboard, recognized the black horse as Louise's saddle animal. He took a firmer grip on the seat and looked at Colie. The young man seemed to be enjoying himself. There wasn't a line of worry on his clean cut face.

"Pretty lively," said the doctor.

Colie, with his foot on the brake and both arms rigid, nodded. Moonstone canyon trail was not a boulevard. He was not to be lured into conversation. He was giving his whole mind and all of his magnetism to the team.

Boyar and Apache took advantage of every turn, pitch, steep descent and ford to display the demoniacal ingenuity inspired by their outraged feelings. They were splendid, obedient saddle animals, but to be bucked and strapped in irritating harness and hitched to that four wheeled disgrace, a buckboard!

Anno Marshall chatted happily with Louise, punctuating her lively chatter with subdued little cries of delight as some new turn in the trail opened on a vista unimaginably beautiful, especially to her eastern eyes.

Young Dr. Marshall, in the front seat with Colie, braced his feet and smiled. He had had experience in a New York ambulance, but then that had been over level streets. He glanced over the edge of the canyon road, and his smile faded a little. It faded entirely as the front wheel sheared off a generous shovel of earth from a sharp upright angle of the hill as the team took the turn at a gallop.

"The road needs widening there anyway," commented Colie, as though apologizing.

"I have my—er—repair kit with me," said the genial doctor. "I'm a surgeon."

Colie nodded, but kept his eyes rigidly on the horses. Evidently this immaculate of the white collar and cuffs and the stylish gray tweeds had "sand."

"They're a little fussy, but I know 'em," said Colie as Boyar, apparently terror stricken at a manzanita that he had passed hundreds of times, reared, his fore feet pawing space and the traces dangerously slack. Louise bit her lower lip and quickly called Anne's attention to a spot of vivid color on the hillside. To Dr. Marshall's surprise, Colie struck Apache, who was behaving smartly with the whip. Apache leaped forward, bringing Boyar down to his feet again. The doctor would have been inclined to strike Boyar for misbehaving. He saw Colie's wisdom and smiled. To have punished Boyar when already on his hind feet would have been folly.

At the top of the next grade the lathering, restive ponies finally settled to a stubborn trot. "Mad clean through," said Colie.

"I should say they were behaving well enough," said the doctor, not as much as an opinion as to relieve his tense nerves in speech.

"When a bronc gets to acting lady-like then is the time to look out," said Colie. "Boyar and Apache have never been in harness before. Seems kind of queer to 'em."

"What! Never been—why, huh! For heaven's sake, don't let Mrs. Marshall hear that!"

Walter Stone and his wife made the Marshalls feel at home immediately. Walter Stone had known Dr. Marshall's father, and he found in the son a pleasant living recollection of his old friend. Aunt Eleanor and Louise had visited with Anne when they were east. She was Anne Winthrop then, and Louise and she had found much in common to enjoy in shopping and sightseeing. Their one regret was that Louise would have to return to the west before Anne's marriage to the young Dr. Marshall they admired so much. There had been vague promises of coming west after "things were settled," as Anne put it, which was merely another way of saying, "After we are married and have become enough used to each other to really enjoy a long trip west."

The Marshalls had arrived, with three years of happiness behind them and apparently with an ace or so of happiness to look forward to, for they were quiet, unassuming young folks, with plenty of money and no desire whatever to make people aware of it.

In the shadows of the mountain evening they congregated on the veranda and chatted about the east, the west and incidentally about the proposed picnic they were to enjoy a few days later, when "boots and saddles" would be the order of the day. "And the trails are not bad, Anne," said Louise. "When you get used to them you'll forget all about them, but your pony won't. He'll be just as deliberate and anxious about your safety and his at the end of the week as he was at the beginning."

"Imagine! A week of riding about these mountains! How Billy would have enjoyed it, doctor!"

"Yes. But I believe he is having a pretty good time where he is."

"We wish he could be here, Anne," said Louise. "I've never met your brother. He's always been away when I have been east."

"Which has been his misfortune," said Dr. Marshall.

"He writes such beautiful letters about the desert and his mining claim

—that's his latest fad—and says he's

much stronger. But I believe they all

say that when they have his trouble,

you know."

"From Billy's last letter I should

say he was in pretty fair shape," said

the doctor. "He's living outdoors and

at a good altitude, somewhere on the

desert. He's making money. He posts



In the Radiance of the Porch Light Stood a Wonderfully Attired Stranger.

als letters at a town called Daggett, in this state."

"Up above San Berdoo," said Walter Stone. And he straightway drifted into reverie.

"Hello!" exclaimed Dr. Marshall, leaning forward. "Sounds like the exhaust of a pretty heavy car. I didn't imagine any one would drive that canyon road after dark."

"Unusual," said Stone, getting to his feet. "Some one in a hurry. I'll turn on the porch light and defy the mosquitoes."

With a leonine roar and a succeeding clatter of empty cylinders an immense racing car stopped at the gate below. The powerful headlight shot a widening pathway through the night. Voices came distinctly from the vicinity of the machine. Before Walter Stone had reached the bottom step of the porch a huge figure appeared from out the shadows. In the radiance of the porch light stood a wonderfully attired stranger. Frock coat, silk hat, patent leathers, striped trousers and pearl gaiters, a white vest and a noticeable watch chain adorned the driver of the automobile. He stood for a minute blinking in the light; then he swept his hat from his head with muscular grace. "Excuse me for intrudin'," he said. "I seen this gilm and headed for it. Is Mr. Walter Stone at lee-sure?"

"I'm Walter Stone," said the rancher, somewhat mystified.

"My name's Summers, Jack Summers, proprietor of the Rose Girl mine." And Overland Red, erstwhile sheriff of Abilene, cowboy, tramp, prospector, gun man and many other interesting things, proffered a highly engraved calling card. Again he bowed profoundly, his hat in his hand, a white carnation in his buttonhole and rapture in his heart. He had seen Louise again—Louise, leaning forward, staring at him incredulously. Wouldn't the rose girl be surprised? She was.

"I can't say that I quite understand"—began Stone.

"Why, it's the man who borrowed my pony!" exclaimed Louise.

"Correct, miss. I—I come to thank

you for lendin' me the cayuse that

time."

Walter Stone simply had to laugh. "Come up and rest after your trip up the canyon. Of course you want to see Colie. He told me about your findin' the claim. Says you have given him a quarter interest. I'm glad you're doing well."

"I took a little run in to Los to get some new tires. The desert eats 'em up pretty fast. The Guzzuh, she cast her off hind shoe the other day. I was scared she'd go lame. Bein' up this way, I thought I'd roll up and see Colie."

"The 'Guzzuh'?" queried Stone.

"You rode up, then?"

"Nope. The Guzzuh is me little old racin' car. I christened her that right after I got so as I could climb on to her without her pitchin' me off. She's some bronc, she is."

CHAPTER XIV.

A Red Episode.

OVERLAND RED, despite his outward regeneration, was Overland Red still, only a little more so. His overwhelming apparel accentuated his peculiarities, his humorous gestures, his silent self-consciousness. But there was something big, forceful and wholesome about the man, something that attracted despite his incongruities.

Young Dr. Marshall studied him, racking his memory for a name. Presently he turned to his wife. "What was Billy's partner's name—the miner? I've forgotten."

"A Mr. Summers, I believe. Yea, I'm sure. Jack Summers Billy called him in his letters."

"Just a minute," said the doctor, turning to Overland, who sat, huge limbed, smiling, red visaged, happy. "Pardon me. You said Mr. Jack Summers, I believe. Do you happen to know a Mr. Winthrop, Billy Winthrop?"

"Me? What, Billy? Billy Winthrop! Say, is this me? I inhaled a whole lot of gasoline comin' up that grade, but I ain't feelin' dizzy. Billy Winthrop? Why?—And his exclamation subsided as he asked cautiously, "Did

(To be Continued)